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ABSTRACT

This paper shows how integrating the arts into the social studies curriculum enhances learning and cultural awareness. Using visual and performing arts stimulate students to become more receptive to learning and builds community. The paper provides a review of the literature on the importance of arts and integration into the social studies. The document concludes with recommendations about how to increase the effectiveness of the arts in schools for parents, teachers, school boards, school districts, researchers, and authors. (EH)

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INTEGRATING VISUAL AND PERFORMING ART INTO SOCIAL STUDIES

Presented to Dr. Mary Jo Lass

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By

Julie Romero

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INTRODUCTION

"Americans want quality education in their schools. Quality education means total education. And total education means using every possible means to teach" (Kiester, 1985, p. 27). Education is changing in American schools. Parents and educators, now more comfortable with change, are striving to produce children who will think creatively (Kiester, 1985). This process will be encouraged and enhanced with the integration of the arts into all aspects of the school curriculum.

Social studies is ideally suited to cross-curricular learning because its broad scope and subject matter lends itself to integrating art in real-life experiences (Kiester, 1985, p. 25).

History is the past and the past shapes the events of today. Students cannot fully understand history without realizing that events happened in a certain time and place, to people with certain values and customs that often are not those we have today. Nevertheless these events helped shape our society as we know it (Armstrong & Landi, 1990).

The history and culture of a people cannot be fully understood without knowing the poems and literature, the performing arts, and the visual arts that express the feelings and beliefs of a certain time and place. If history is a story well told, the story should be dynamic and exciting. Visual arts, the use of paintings, drawings, and posters, dramatize events

and excite and stimulate the desire to know more. Performing arts, where a student takes an active part in events of historical or social importance brings home to him or her the problems of that society in a very personal way. Writing songs and poems gives a student ownership of his vision of events (Lee, 1985).

The infusion of the arts into the core curriculum promotes creative ways of learning problem solving, promotes creative thinking, and gives motivation to the student (Lee, 1995). "Art is a vehicle for interpreting and integrating the human experience and the role which artists play in performing these tasks" (Elementary Art Education Guide, 1983, p. 15).

Educators are beginning to recognize the need to provide a means for self-discovery, for developing critical thinking, problem solving, and creative thought processes in their students (Visual and Performing Arts Framework, 1989).

A comprehensive art education program is critical to achieving a complete education. Integrating the arts into social studies and other curricular areas "helps create well - rounded students with multidimensional interests and capabilities" (Getty Center For Education in the Arts, 1992, p. 11).

In this paper the author intends to show how integrating the arts into the Social Studies curriculum enhances learning and gives us an insight into our own and other cultures.

The author intends to show that using visual and performing

arts stimulate students to become more receptive to learning and builds community. That the arts intensify our imaginations, encourage flexible thinking, and help produce disciplined effort.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

These are many questions one could ask about the value of integrating the arts into the mainstream curriculum. Since social studies is the most important look we can take of ourselves as civilized human beings, this paper proposes to answer three questions about the infusion of the arts into social studies as a special and better way to teach.

Does the integration of visual and performing arts in social studies help students learn respect and concern for the beliefs, attitudes, and values of people both in historical and in present time?

Does the study and practice of the arts serve to facilitate the growth of a host of important skills in general education?

Can creative activity improve motivation, participation, and enhance learning in social studies?

DEFINITIONS

The following terms are important to know in order to fully understand the concept of this paper.

1. Social Studies - A teaching field that is interdisciplinary and includes: history, geography, civics, economics, anthropology, political science, sociology and psychology. (Dejnozka, et al., 1982).
2. History - A "dramatic series of events in the past that helped shape the present" (History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, 1988, p. 4).
3. Culture - The history, ideals, values, politics, and beliefs of a particular people (History - Social Science Framework, 1988).
4. The Arts - "Encompasses the disciplines of dance, drama/theater, music, and visual art" (Visual and Performing Arts Framework, 1989, p. 3).
5. Icosahedron - "A body with twenty sides, a solid with twenty plane surfaces" (Christman, 1983, p. 3).

HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

"Our Cro-Magnon ancestors may have started to paint and sculpt as a way of coping with expanded knowledge and growing population" (Pfuffer, 1983, Cited in Elementary Art Education Guide, p. 6).

Art is a powerful tool of communication with the past. It helps us understand ideals and values - how they are transmitted in our and others' cultures, both in the present and in the past (Elementary Art Education Guide, 1983).

According to the Elementary Art Education Guide (1983), "The visual arts have been an important dimension of every culture in the history of the world" (p. 10). Every aspect of our daily lives, from our homes, clothing, entertainment. - everything we use depends upon the heritage that was passed to us from our ancestors. The visual arts provide us with the ever changing mores of our culture and provide us with a history of change (Lee, 1985).

Integrating the arts into the social studies curriculum is a relatively new idea whose time, at last, has come. Surprisingly, the idea of integrating art into the school curriculum was espoused by some school boards in the middle 1930's, its purpose expressed in terms of community needs, resources, and goals (Efland, 1983). Phrases like, "... art is an integrating vehicle in the curriculum" (p. 40), began being heard. Although the move to integrate the arts into the curriculum had more to

do with finances than loftier goals, the integration was begun in elementary grades (Efland, 1983).

According to Efland (1983), the idea of integrating the arts into the social studies curriculum gained converts because of the new importance of social experimentation brought on by the New Deal. "Conservative forces played a role in elevating the subject to help combat alien ideologies in the form of communism and fascism. The importance of history and civics were thus stressed as ways to strengthen the American way of life" (Efland, 1983, p. 41).

While the integration of the arts into social studies was done with a certain enthusiasm in the elementary schools, it was not true in high schools. As the high school became accessible to more students the arts were given as separate, elective courses. They lost status as an essential cultural tool and declined in importance and remained so for years (Efland, 1983).

The arts received a boost in the 1970's with the introduction of film making as a tool of creativity and self-expression. It gave focus and a way to interact with others that gave success to students who could not express their feelings and ideas in a more conventional way (Rooney, 1989).

There is no curriculum with which the arts cannot identify, and social studies, especially, becomes more important and meaningful when the arts are employed to highlight the

differences and consistencies in history (Hoffman, Kantner, Colbet, & Sims, 1991).

MAJOR ISSUES CONTROVERSIES, PROGRAMS, AND CONTRIBUTORS

As in every endeavor in human experience, experts are not in agreement on the best means of educating our children. The idea of integrating art into the traditional ways of teaching students is embraced with great enthusiasm by many in the field of education, and regarded as a threat by many others.

Among those strongly endorsing the integration of the arts into social studies and other disciplines is Gloria Kiester (1985), who strongly holds that stressing reading, writing, and arithmetic while neglecting the aesthetic balance of the arts is only half-education. Kiester (1985), goes on to say that in order to achieve the goals of total education, the student must develop rational and aesthetic behaviors in each of these areas. "Therefore, the relationship of the arts to education is fundamental" (Kiester, p. 25).

Thomas Regeliki (1977), agrees with Ms. Kiester (1985), and feels that stressing only the three R's without integrating the arts... "has grave implications for society" (Kiester, p. 25).

Recent research in the United States has shown that many educators favor using the arts in developing basic skills. It was found that the arts boosted learning in all basic subjects, attendance was improved, motivation was stronger, and test scores were higher (Kiester, 1985).

In January, 1987, the Getty Center for Education in the Arts

sponsored a huge assembly of educators who were eager to help in the cause of academic reform. The speakers, including the U.S. Secretary of Education "armed the audience with every conceivable agreement for the centrality of the arts in the curriculum" (Lynn, 1987, p. 6). The speakers brought cheering, applauding listeners to their feet by their rousing eloquence on the importance of the arts in a proper education" (Lynn, 1987, p. 6).

Research done in Albuquerque elementary schools showed test results were higher among students who were in band or orchestra than among those not involved in music. The longer they had been in band the higher they scored (Kiester, 1985).

In Great Britain, Joe Coe, chief advisor for the County of Oxfordshire, England agreed with his American contemporaries (cited in Kiester, 1985, p. 25). "There's absolutely no sign that increased attention to the arts in any way inhibits the development of sound basic skills. Very much the reverse seems to be true. The survey found that basic skills were highest where the curriculum was widest..." (Coe, 1979, p. 61, cited in Kiester, 1985, p. 25).

Using art in social studies heightens the perception needed for cross-cultural understanding. The arts enhance cultural awareness and help students see life from another perspective. They are able to see more clearly the people and culture they are studying. Art-enriched curriculum is also used at schools in Hartford, Seattle, and St. Louis. New York University, Rutgers

University, and St. Olaf College offer teacher education programs with multi-arts experience (Kiester, 1985).

The realization of the goals of art-integrated education has not been met as yet, when it is so easy to list the names of institutions who strongly advocate these programs. But Ms. Kiester (1985) is hopeful that schools of the twenty-first century will make a commitment to produce children who not only can think creatively, but find new ways to cope with the problems that threaten our civilization. She feels that this kind of learning can be a reality in American schools. "Total learning will be a reality only when teachers, administrators, and communities make a total commitment to total education" (Kiester, 1985, p. 27).

While there is a burgeoning movement toward integration of the arts into the mainstream curriculum, there is also a solid core of those who oppose the idea. Teachers (and school boards), resent an outside expert coming in and telling them everything they have been doing is wrong (Salina Arts and Humanities Commission, 1992). Parents recognize that there is a status hierarchy among school subjects. Solid core subjects such as math carry more weight than others. It is natural, then, that the arts are regarded as "semisolids" (Eisner p. 11) even in the eyes of college admission committees, thus reducing their value in the structure of schooling (Eisner, 1988).

Art educators and teachers alike have generally felt that

the arts were primarily to help children develop their creative abilities. Therefore they resisted having structure in their art programs (Eisner, 1988). "These views of art in education have had a chilling effect on its contributions to our children. As a culture, we have regarded art as a product of emotion rather than mind... We have eschewed programs that have structure since we are fearful they would stifle the child's creative expression. We have correctly perceived that, as success is now defined in our schools, the arts have limited short-term instrumental utility; they process little weight in the status hierarchy among the academic subjects we teach or in the academic credit assigned those subjects" (Eisner, 1988, p. 12).

SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

Does the integration of visual and performing arts in social studies help students learn respect and concern for the beliefs, attitudes and values of people both in historical and in present times?

Experts tell us that integrating the arts into social studies enhances cultural awareness. It also fosters cross-cultural understanding (Kiester, 1985). "Other people's songs give us insight into how their pleasure or pain is subtly distinct from our own. Their art helps us sense how they feel about their important events and how we feel about our own. Inevitably then we see that their lives center on the same ultimate concerns - life and death, love and fear - that comprise the universal perspectives from which every life can be viewed. The arts are universal awareness" (Kiester, 1985, p. 27).

The History - Social Studies Framework (1988) describes the goal of educators in the social sciences is, among other things, helping students "...to respect the right of others to differ with them" (p. 2). Lee (1985) calls the arts a function of life itself, and states that the process of making art "... can give insight to all other areas of learning. The arts help people understand themselves in historical, cultural, and aesthetic terms; they provide people with broader choices about their environment and influence the way they do their work and live

their lives. Since artistic expression is also truly basic to the individual's intellectual development it must be included as a component of all education" (The Arts, Education and Americans Panel, 1977, p. 248 cited in Lee, 1985, p. 29).

Armstrong and Landi (1990), in their article, "An Integrated Learning Experience," tell us that involving many different subject areas gives meaning to learning, that students gain a more complete picture of the subject they are studying. They put forth the idea that the studies of ancient civilizations are necessary to understanding our past, and therefore, our present cultures.

In a case study, Thomas Rooney (1989) states that the study of history enhances the study of the arts and that the reverse is also true. Rooney (1989) has found that in societal, instructional, and individual education the arts play a major role. "One of the major goals of education should be to promote the continuation of cultural, transmitting values and concepts of civilization from one generation to the next" (Rooney, 1989, p. 6). Since, Rooney (1989) observes, the study of the arts creates a door through which we can view the past, we can use the understanding we acquire to put our own value systems into perspective. Rooney (1989) goes on to say "Humans experience and give expression to their most deeply held values, beliefs, and images through the arts, and there can be no adequate form of general education that does not include them" (p. 6).

Does the study and practice of the arts serve to facilitate the growth of a host of important skills in general education ?

Creating an integrated wholeness in different subject areas by using the arts as an equal partner, allows educators to teach to the whole child.

As part of her exploration of an integrated and holistic approach to learning, Jackie Werner (1981) sets down her reasons for using art education: "Art develops problem solving skills by providing actual problems which are open-ended in nature. Art is another means of helping children make the connections between concrete and abstract levels of reality by allowing them to experience the process of abstractly representing a concrete experience. Creativity is developed by giving children an opportunity to experiment with their ideas, and to experience first hand the creative drive for making and changing things" (p. 4).

Teachers are always looking for ways to present their subject in new and exciting ways. Using the arts as a teaching tool creates excitement by its very difference from the drudgery of reading chapters and answering questions.

The Salina Arts and Humanities Commission (1992) tells us that the arts encourage creativity and that,"... creativity distinguishes humans from other life forms" (p.6). The Commission (1992) goes on to say, "Creative play often has greater effect than more teacher centered strategies of

instruction such as lecture, lecture demonstration, or teacher - student dialog where a Soratic method might be employed. The 'dialog' that a child has with himself/herself working through a variety of arts activities with peers, can result in high level understandings in various disciplines. This dialog has the freshness and excitement of exploring frontier territory" (p. 5).

The Council for Basic Education (1987), "has scientific support to suggest that creative arts, if taught well, can be instrumental in addressing some of the decade's most daunting public school challenges: they can raise standardized test scores, improve attendance, and increase motivation and self esteem" (cited in Salina Arts and Humanities Commission, 1992, p. 6).

One might wonder if the basic skills of the three R's can be facilitated by a viable art program in the school. The Frederick County Board of Education (1983) states that, yes, it can. "Art experiences that teach tactile and visual modes increase curiosity and vocabulary and promote better understanding of reading material. Also, puppets provide many worth while activities to encourage reading and storytelling. A new adventure today is the advent of young film makers in the elementary classroom. By developing story, animation, and filming, children become more aware of content. Through the dramatization of stories, articulation and self concept can also be improved" (p. 5).

In a study, Leslie Willet, Hollins College, and David Parks (1992), state that, "Specially designed art lessons can be used as a medium to enhance the comprehension, transfer, and retention of specific concepts traditionally taught in the basic school curriculum" (p.1). The study pointed out that children learn by different processes - some by receiving visual information, others by physical participation or hands on manipulation. Teachers would serve their students best by instructing each type of learner in their best learning genre. The study went on to say that when learning and teaching styles were matched, increased achievement and motivation were the results (Willet, College, & Parks, 1992).

By transmitting information using multiple modes, instruction is more likely to be comprehended and concepts are more readily imprinted on the brain (Willet, et al., 1992).

The study by Willet, College, and Parks (1992) consisted of four classrooms of students, their teachers, and one art teacher. Two classrooms were the treatment group and two were the comparison group.

After tests in both reading and mathematics were given to all students, the treatment groups were taught an art lesson by the art teacher (Willet et al., 1992). The analysis of the results of all tests indicated, "... that in the combined achievement scores across all concepts there was a significant difference in adjusted means between the comparison and treatment groups in favor of the treatment groups" (Willet, et al., 1992, p. 9).

In agreement with the study by Willet, College, and Parks (1992), a study by Douglas Marschalek (1985) finds that through understanding how children respond to works of art, instruction and curriculum can be tailored to best accommodate learning. "Art education serves many of the purposes of schooling including that of contributing to the education of the whole person, the student who is prepared to live a competent and fulfilling life in society. Because pictorial imagery is at the root of language and is itself a rich source of meaning, art education furthers the cause of literacy in school programs" (Elementary Art Education Guide, 1983, p. 11).

Can creative activity improve motivation, participation and enhance learning in social studies?

"Words bring images, thoughts bring images, and feelings bring images; without the arts our ability to express and store experiences or images is diminished" (Elementary Art Education Guide, 1983, p. 3).

The Salina Arts and Humanities Commission (1992) tells us that when art activities are integrated with other subjects, including social studies, there is a great jump in student motivation and learning. The Crocker Elementary School in Fitchburg, Massachusetts in collaboration with the Fitchburg Art Museum, integrated the arts with other disciplines and found, "The learning that went on was staggering" (cited in Salina Arts and Humanities Commission, 1992, p. 4). Don Commings, the

school principal reported both higher reading scores and increased attendance and was understandably very excited about the program (Salina Arts and Humanities Commission, 1992).

Integrating the arts into the curriculum helps students to appreciate school as an exciting and desirable place. The arts appeal to the imagination and stimulate interest in learning (Visual and Performing Arts Framework, 1989).

The visual arts enhance student's learning in a multitude of areas. In social development it teaches them to work together. In physical development it helps fine motor skills, and incognative development by using memory, imagination, and observation skills (Hoffman, et al., 1991).

When a child has a blank paper before him, and he creates an image that pleases him, he is motivated to try further. A pleasing experience can come to him by creating his own rhythms with pot, pans, and a stick. These creations belong to him (Hoffman et al.,1991). "Through the experience he begins to define self and place in the world, an emerging aesthetic attitude stimulated by the dialogue between child and other" (Hoffman et al., 1991, p. 23).

Larry Kantner (1991) sees children's explorations as a way "to feel, touch, hear, and see their world as a part of themselves. Through their curiosity, the self emerges as they discover, establishing a set of meanings and a network of significance" (p. 23).

"As connections are made and stimulated, children are able to attach more personal meaning to these events, providing empowerment for self-realization and self-identification" (Hoffman et al., 1991, p. 23). Kantner (1991) further states that "Working across the disciplines can provide the necessary connections for learning and expressing" (p. 23).

In her study, Elizabeth Christman (1983) uses the creation of an icosahedron as a means of integrating four major curricular areas - multi-cultural study, visual arts, language arts, and geometry. Construction of the icosahedron involves bringing pictures or personal items from home to contribute to the making of the project, which is then hung in the room for students to refer to. Then, through a series of projects such as self portraits, biographies, bulletin board, and ultimately meetings with community leaders, Ms. Christman created a climate of high personal participation and motivation by involving parents, other students, and people in the community (Christman, 1983). Ms. Christman (1983) states that all students were, "encouraged to note the interrelationships between community members and the need for each member to fulfill his role in the community" (p. 13).

"The arts provide the student with a means of creativity. Instruction through the arts emphasizes active involvement by the student; the focus is on learning by doing" (Lee, 1985, p. 31).

CONCLUSION

The world is changing, and we as educators must change with it. If we want children who will think creatively we must provide the tools for this process to take place.

Experts agree that we need to have knowledge of art history in order to better understand the past. History is the past and the past shapes what we are today. Social Studies is an ideal subject for integrating the arts, for, by studying other cultures through art, we learn to appreciate and respect the feelings, achievements, emotions, hopes and fears of other times and places.

Integrating the arts into social studies motivates students to learn more by making history come alive, helping them see that these were real people, real events. History is the most exciting subject we teach and integrating art as a tool for learning brings emotion to the events of the past and inspires passion to the subject.

Through understanding the culture and history of other peoples, we increase the understanding of our time and of ourselves.

If the creative arts, integrated into the mainstream curriculum, can increase motivation, raise test scores, increase self-esteem and do all the many things these studies have told us, what, then, are we waiting for?

"What our children become, how well they learn to think, and the variety of forms they know how to read are in large measure due to what we have given them an opportunity to learn. As the ad says, 'A mind is a terrible thing to waste'" (Eisner, 1988, p. 24).

As educators we should always strive to help produce educated minds and understanding hearts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents: Educate yourselves! Find out everything you can about integrating art into mainstream curriculum. Push your school board! They have to be responsive if you case is strong and you present it with passion and intelligence. Help elect to the school board people who have open minds and are willing to listen.

Teachers: Get inservice training as a constant source of learning and renewed enthusiasm. Don't reject anything until you understand what the subject really is. Learning new stuff can be wonderfully enlightening and fun! Accept the challenge.

School boards: Because you've always done it a certain way it doesn't mean it's necessarily the right way. Be willing to change when new ideas are presented. Not change for change's sake but for the betterment of our children's education.

School districts: Line up your soldiers before your present a new idea to a school board. Have compelling ideas and proof of their validity. Get the PTA to back your position. Don't give up.

Researchers/Authors: All the above people and groups, need facts and figures. We need statistics on how much test scores are improved as a result of integrating the arts into the curriculum. We need someone to address all the fears of major change in one easy-to-understand volume or paper. Easy? No. But something that could change things for the better.

"... for discipline - based art education to realize the aims it embraces, the school district must provide support for the program throughout its schools, kindergarten through twelfth grade" (Eisner, 1988, p. 36).

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